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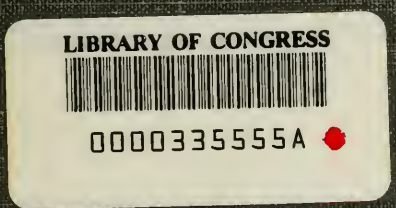

MOSES AND WASHINGTON.

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED TO

THE STUDENTS OF WABASH COLLEGE,

FEBRUARY 21st, 1864,

BY

REV. JOSEPH F. TUTTLE, D. D.

Published by Wabash Magazine Association.

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"And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses."—Deut. 34:10.

Moses is thus singled out from among all the great prophets of Israel and declared to be the greatest of them all. In the same strain he was called "the man of God." The promised Messiah was compared to him, and by a sort of common consent he has come to be regarded not only as the greatest of Israelites but the greatest of men. It is not necessary here to discuss the question which seeks to decide how much of his greatness was due to the direct inspiration of God. It is enough to say that no man can be either small or great who is not so in consequence of God's imparted gifts, so that it were as really a folly to seek to detract from the claim of Moses as the greatest of great men because he became so by the gifts of inspiration as it would to take the purple from the regal shoulders of Shakspeare, because he received his genius from God. To the humblest glow-worm, to the lowliest floweret, to the feeblest intellect as truly as to such imperial souls as Isaiah and David, and Paul, and Shakspeare, and Newton, and Moses, the greatest of them all, it might be truly said, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it why dost thou glory as if thou hast not received it?"—1. Cor., 4:7.

I trust that it may not be unprofitable to *discuss the greatness of Moses in order to ascertain what were some of its marked elements.*

The *First* element which I notice is the strength and equipoise of his mental faculties—and their perfect subjugation to his will. Here notice the *strength* of his faculties as contrasted with weakness. There is no point in his momentous history which does not illustrate the natural gifts of his mind. As a lawgiver, as a reasoner, as the deviser of the largest plans as a civil ruler, as a military leader, as a poet, the man stands before us in all the grandeur of his rare powers. We look at him as a student in all the learning of the Egyptians, as a man choosing to suffer affliction with his people rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, as an exile in the desert, amid the sublime silence of Sinai and Horeb communing with God, and his own spirit, as a prophet, demanding of Pharaoh the release of his slaves, as the leader of the most sublime exodus known to history, as the founder of a new nation under circumstances of the greatest embarrassment, and yet from first to last we detect no sign of weakness in any mental faculty. One man is great as a mathematician, another as a linguist, a third as a statesman and a fourth as a military chieftain, and yet each one may show weakness in the qualities which distinguish the rest. Moses was great in every department—he was weak nowhere.

And then the *equipoise* of his faculties was so perfect. If we look at his reason alone we might say this is the lock of his strength, but when we pass to his conceptive faculties by which he brings up truth and combines it into forms and plans we might say surely this is his main power. Or we examine his imagination as displayed in his Psalm at the Red Sea, or in that as he was about to die, or the 90th Psalm written by him, or his final discourses to his countrymen as recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy, and we find that his imagination is the equal of his powers of reason and conception. Neither is superior to the other. Like three mountains of equal base and altitude towering side by side into the serene sky were the mental faculties of Moses. Each is great, and yet as comparing either one with the other the casual observer at first is deceived by the very equality of greatness which he observes. If only one were an ordinary mountain, in order to use it as a

standard, we could mount up to the grandeur of the rest, but to have three Mount Blancs side by side is to deceive the beholder at first into an impression that each is a mountain of ordinary size. Thus to illustrate his mental forces by the spheres in which they wrought, we look at him as a revolutionist, as a dictator, as the organizer of a new government with a system of laws and religion previously unknown, as a historian and a man of letters, and we find an amazing equality among those forces. In the equipoise of his faculties he was truly one of the greatest of men.

And not only in these respects was he great, but to the strength and equipoise of his faculties, we must add their perfect *discipline*, their entire *subjugation* to his will. Many a man has strong faculties but they are strong as the wild buffalo or horse which has not been subdued. Such was the severe discipline with which Moses had coerced his faculties into an entire obedience that they never failed him in the most trying emergencies, whether confronting his dispirited countrymen, or their insolent oppressors, whether enacting his sublime part at the Red Sea or passing sentence on the rebels who aimed their blows at God through him.

In the strength, equipoise and perfect discipline of his faculties we have the foundation of that greatness in Moses of which I am now discoursing. There was no one-sidedness, no disproportion, no vagrant fitfulness in his intellectual parts.

The *Second* element of his greatness consisted in his religious faith and love. This is the splendid supplement to the element we have before considered.

Faith as defining the relations of the soul to a real God has every variety of manifestation and every degree of power. I will not degrade this noble word by saying that the heathen who know not the true God, or those who know of God, but either reject or neglect him, have it. Our liberal philosophers of the present day fancy they detect a real faith in the devotees of Brahma and Buddh, in the life of Socrates and Confucius, and the bloodless morality of David Hume and Humboldt. But the existence of real faith in these cases is impossible because its first element is wanting, the knowledge of the true

God. Trust in Brahma or in some ideal being, in the cant phrase of modern sentimentalism called "the good God" or some such name, is not the faith of which the apostle discoursed in the eleventh of his epistle to the Hebrews, when he spake of the holy confidence which Abel and Noah and Abraham and Moses reposed in the only living and true God. Moses had a knowledge of God by an inward experience of his power constraining him to reject the golden bribes which sought to keep him loyal to the most polished and powerful court on earth. He must have felt that it was not by his own power he made that marvelous choice to be one with the slaves of the court he was abandoning. Besides this he had met God in the burning bush and had been filled with the deepest reverence for the actual God. Indeed the God on whom his faith reposed was no mere creature of the imagination, an ideal being of the poet or the artist; God was as real and as true a being as was Moses, of whose presence, power, wisdom and goodness he had as real evidence as he had of his own existence. At the burning bush, at the Red Sea, in the mount, at the mercy seat, he talked with God, as one talks to his friends.

In such a God Moses believed not with a halting and half-hearted faith but with all his heart. His mighty mental faculties comprehending God in all His glory, he was ready to say as Job did, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes." And thus it came to pass that earth's peerless intellect became as a little child in his relations to the Great *I Am*. There was no boastful impertinence in his approaches to God, but this Moses was not only the greatest but he was also the meekest of men.

And what more admirable sight is there in the world than a man of great intellect resting on God with all the docility and confidence of a little child! Faith in God in the humblest is admirable, but there is no less temptation to a wicked self-sufficiency in one whose powers are feeble. It seems natural for one who is weak to trust in one who is strong, but when a man is endowed with vast powers, having the gift of prophecy, understanding all mystery, and all knowledge, he is so flattered

by his fellows, so deferred to by his dependents, so superior to those about him, that he is tempted to pride and self-sufficiency, and even to consider himself a sort of God. How many an intellect like La Place has said "there is no God," or like Humboldt has felt that Christ's gospel was good enough for common folks, but folly to one so wise and good as he was in his own conceit!

Moses was as great in his faith as he was in his intellect. Both qualities shine with the most brilliant lustre in his life.

But love was as conspicuous as faith in him. How gentle and forbearing he was to his froward countrymen! When they sinned to their own peril, how tenderly does he intercede for them! They were to him as children. To such good men as Joshua he was attached by a love too exalted for any mixture of meanness. But its dearest object was God. What fondness, what force of love is shown in all his relations to God. He had the most glorious gifts of mind, vast knowledge, faith that could remove mountains, he lived for the good of others, so that he gave not money but himself for their good, and yet with all these splendid qualities he had the crowning glory of charity, love to God and man.

Thirdly and briefly I must add to these elements of Moses' greatness his *executive talent.*

We have examples of this kind, in which we find great talents, and great moral purity, but no distinguished executive talent. From the time Moses smote his first blow at a tyrant killing him, until he had led his people through incredible difficulties to the frontiers of the promised land, he manifested the highest talent in carrying great plans into execution, the talent of realizing in fact the ideas of theory. He never seemed to lack resources in conducting that sublime exodus which transformed a nation of dispirited slaves into a great intelligent nation, destined to be the wonder of all coming time, the marvel of history.

Let us now look over our synopsis of the elements which enter into the greatness of Moses. His talents were of the highest order—they were strong, they were perfectly balanced, they were disciplined into the most complete subjugation to his

will; his faith in God was of that sort that it realized not merely the being but the presence of God in such a sense that all apparent odds against him were nothing at any time because God was on his side; his love to God and to man like a blessed master passion controlled and characterized him in his motives, his words, and his actions; and to conclude the enumeration, his executive abilities, his gifts, as the realizer of ideas into facts, his gifts as a leader, were of so distinguished a character that we are justified in averring him so far as these elements go to have been the greatest of men.

Fourth. Moses had the opportunity for the exercise of his talents. In all practical greatness may be detected the element of opportunity. Had all the facts in astronomy been known as they are now known before Gallileo, Copernicus, Kepler and Newton demonstrated the principles of that science, these men might have possessed all the gifts which are credited to them, but the want of an opportunity to use these talents would have consigned them to a grave over which a grateful and admiring world would have raised no monuments more lasting than brass. The same is true of all distinguished inventors and discoverers. What would have been Franklin or Watt, or Stevenson, or Fulton, or Whitney, or Daguerre, with all their talents, but without that important fact which we call opportunity? What would Alexander have been without a world to conquer? or Mirabeau without any revolutionary forces to be subdued and directed? or Cromwell in the peaceful reign of Victoria? Mere talent is nothing without opportunity for its exercise.

This element of greatness was not lacking to Moses. He was born just at the day-break of the most thrilling events. Facts more wonderful than romance attended his early childhood and education at a court on which he was to inflict the vengeance of God. He had the opportunity—rarely if ever accorded to another—to make that immortal preference of affliction with God's enslaved people, over all the pleasures which a rich, polished, and powerful court could offer. He was able to take the side of the oppressed in a magnificent way sacrificing all he had in the noble work. Then came the opportunities to commune with nature, with God, and his own soul in the desert,

in order to be ready for the crisis which in due time would come to his countrymen in bonds. These were only the preparation for *the* opportunity of his life. In due time God summoned him now in his ripened manhood to go to the Israelites and proclaim the hour of deliverance, and to confront the haughty king with command, with menace and with plague, to compel him to let his slaves leave the house of bondage. How he rises in dignity at every step! What a worthy ambassador he was from the Great King to the tyrant! how incomparably superior does he appear to the royal wretch whom he is lashing from one concession to another, and from one agony to another, until we see him involved in the waters of the Sea, and his adversary with his mystic rod commanding the eager waves to spring upon him and his host.

In all this Moses had the opportunity for the conspicuous display of his gifts, and yet when he raised that triumphal psalm on the shore of the Red Sea, his real work was only begun. See what he had in hand. He was the leader of three millions of people, six hundred thousand of whom were men. They were an immense mob of recently liberated slaves. They were not trained warriors, and yet with them he was to subdue several warlike and hostile nations. They were such children in knowledge that it was necessary for Moses to regulate their internal affairs on principles of equity, before the publication of statute laws. They were infected with the vices and idolatry of the Egyptians, and Moses had the tremendous work in hand first to purge them of these Egyptian taints, and secondly to give them a divine religion in a form adapted to their wants during the journey and when they should be established in the promised land. Closely connected with this last and combined with it, constituting the most sublime work of his life, was the production of a law which should be the seed of all right laws, for all peoples, and times, and the adaptation of that law to the present and future wants of the new nation.

Now trace him step by step from the desert to Pharaoh's court, thence to the Red Sea, thence to Sinai, and thence "unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah" whence he saw with quickened vision the promised land, and you will

see how peerless was the opportunity which he had for the exercise of his peerless gifts. And so well did he exercise his gifts and embrace his opportunity that both gifts and opportunity conspired to place him without a rival on the highest summit of earthly greatness. His gifts, his opportunity and success, in all their magnificent details and aggregate, fully warrant the glowing eulogy with which some inspired pen closed the history which Moses himself had almost finished. "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."

You will agree with me in admitting that when any high exigency arises the great man who is able to fill it is one of the greatest blessings. This is true in the domains of science, literature, and especially in those crises which determine the fate of nations. It is true that God can work by feeble means, and that he sometimes does so. The noisy cackling of geese once saved Rome, but usually Rome was saved not by geese but by men like Fabius, or Brutus, or Scipio, or Cicero. It is possible for God to have settled the doctrinal formulas of Christianity by the pen of an unlettered fisherman, but in fact He did it by the pen of the educated Saul of Tarsus. Occasionally great national deliverances are effected by some gifted soul who has had very little training for such a destiny. Such was that wonderful man, Toussaint Louverture, the hero of St. Domingo. Such are the exceptions. The men whom providence designates to deliver nations usually are not only highly endowed by nature but by education also. The leader of the Jewish Exodus, and the expounder of the christian system, were men trained by divine providence for the work in hand.

The gratitude of Israel to Moses as the great man who led them from the house of bondage to the promised land was so great as to be likely to run into idolatry. Hence his grave was concealed from them, and who ever heard of a Jew so recreant to the holy and stirring traditions of his nation at the time of the Exodus as not to pronounce the name of Moses with peculiar veneration as their greatest prophet, their greatest deliverer, their greatest man? In this they do right.

No great man should be forgotten especially when exalted goodness was combined with that greatness, and most especially when such a man had the opportunity to do great things for a nation or mankind at large and successfully improved it.

I am sure that no one in this intelligent audience will blame me for giving these remarks a bearing on the fact that to-morrow is a day very precious in our American calendar, as the birth day of Washington. As the instructor of young men in such times as these, I am not willing to suffer such an opportunity to pass without distinctly calling attention to the character of the Father of his Country. Not educated at a royal court he was schooled in the most exalted morality by his noble mother and by contact with the good people of his native land. His early training inspired him with a manly virtue and goodness. His mental faculties were strong by nature and they were thoroughly disciplined and subjugated. Patrick Henry before the war of Revolution thought him the greatest man in America. His faculties were in wonderful equipoise and harmony. In him were blended faith and love. The very places near his headquarters at Valley Forge, and, on the heights in New Jersey which overlook that magnificent scene of wood and meadow, valley and mountain, river and bay, towards New York are pointed out where in the darkest hours of the war he was accustomed to bow before God, thence coming with that serenity which no calamity or reverse could disturb. And the very spot is still consecrated as in a sense holy ground where he partook of the Lord's Supper in a grove at the hands of good Dr. Johnes, the sign that his faith rested in Christ, the world's Saviour. And what a splendor there was in that benevolence which he displayed in serving his country, and in vindicating the freedom of man! These qualities were made in the highest degree effective by his vast executive ability. Great in mental faculties, great in faith, and in love, he was also great in action. God allowed a man thus splendidly endowed, to have an opportunity such as is rarely, if ever afforded to any one. Our nation in the face of fearful odds was struggling for life, and a great man was needed for the crisis. God marked out Washington as that great man. With un-

feigned diffidence he assumed the tremendous responsibilities of the position, and during seven years he carried our nation in his great manly bosom as Moses did Israel. He was weak no where—neither at the council board, nor at the head of armies, neither with his pen, nor with his sword, neither as a chieftain heading a momentous revolution, nor as a chief magistrate when the nation's independence was achieved. No suspicions ever clouded his spotless fidelity to God, and his country, no bribes ever corrupted him, no temptations overcame him. Great in mind, great in faith, great in benevolence, great in fidelity, great in war, great in peace, great in life, great in death, great in history, Washington stands before us to-day in his hitherto unmatched excellencies and we may truly say that thus far there has arisen no such man in our country as he.

Our country is now passing through a fearful crisis, and whilst the motives are numerous and powerful to the noblest patriotism, the occasions are not wanting to the basest corruption and treason. The distribution of so many lucrative and important offices, and the sustentation of such vast armies and navies, afford the opportunities to the bad to be as corrupt as possible. Some have not been slow to embrace these occasions. May the execrations of their fellow citizens follow them!

But I am bold to say this is not the general rule. Never was patriotism more honored in practice than now, else how shall we account for the vast preponderance of voluntary enlistments over enforced drafts, or the readiness with which, with only a few execrable exceptions, our people have carried a heavy taxation, and in addition poured out on our soldiers and their families such an affluence, such a munificence of private beneficence as was never paralleled in any other age or nation, or the thrilling spectacle of our veterans scarred with wounds, and covered with glory, which their retirement to their homes at the close of their enlistment could not diminish, yet almost in a mass once more laying themselves on their country's altar for another term?

I am proud of my country as I never was before. Her danger endears her to me, and to-day with this war on her I love

her above my chief earthly joy. I am proud of my countrymen as represented in the army and navy—which are defending our very existence and asserting the rights of other generations. God bless our braves on the land and on the water! And yet now in these perilous struggles it will do every soldier, and every sailor, and every lover of our country, whether father, or mother, or son, or daughter, or brother, or sister, good to turn their eyes away to that august form which stands before us in the person of Washington. Ah! how will the contemplation tend to drive away every unworthy feeling, each low ambition, each paltry rivalry, as we behold the life of such a man!

To you, young men, in the most emphatic terms I commend his character. You are coming on to the stage in perilous times when the blackest and biggest treason the world ever saw is trying to stab our country to the heart. The masses of our countrymen are loyal and this harmony in loyalty will be more and more apparent until the time will come when every man would sooner tear his tongue out, than to allow it to speak a treasonable word. The example of Washington inculcates on you the duty of moderation so long as that is a virtue, but when it ceases to be such, the same illustrious example bids us strike down treason with mailed hands, to strike it with all our might, even though it should hide itself in the innermost sanctuary of home.

But the rebellion totters, the light is breaking through the black storm, reason is returning to the rebels; the day of an assured peace is not distant, a peace of that sort that neither Massachusetts nor South Carolina, neither New York nor Texas, neither North nor South nor East nor West shall dare to disturb it, and out of these fiery tribulations, we shall come a *nation* in such a sense as we were never a nation before. And then one name shall spontaneously rise to every lip, the name of WASHINGTON, and with that illustrious name we will associate that of every true patriot who in these days of peril has done what Washington did, wrought to the full measure of his ability for the salvation of his country!

Patriots have toiled and in their country's cause
Bled nobly ; and their deeds as they deserve
Receive proud recompense. We give in charge
Their names to the sweet lyre. The historic muse
Proud of the treasure marches with it down
To latest times ; and Sculpture in her turn
Gives bond in stone and ever during brass
To guard them and to immortalize her trust.

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